



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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Patricia Fisher (202) 208-5634

INTERIOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HAYDEN ANNOUNCES NEW RULE TO PREVENT INHUMANE TRANSPORT OF BIRDS AND MAMMALS

The Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Mike Hayden, today announced new measures aimed at curbing the inhumane transport of wild birds and mammals imported into the United States. Hayden said the regulations will be enforced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has primary responsibility for inspecting wildlife shipments entering the country.

Under the new guidelines, published in the June 17, 1992 Federal Register, all imported live mammals and birds must be packed, shipped, and cared for under specified humane and healthful conditions. In addition, all shipping crates must meet standards for live animals set by the International Air Transport Association.

"From 1986 to 1990, an estimated 79,000 wild birds died in transit to the United States, and another 258,000 died in quarantine," Hayden said. "This rule will help reduce these tragic losses."

Every year, U.S. imports of live wildlife total approximately 14,000 primates, 500,000 wild birds, 600,000 reptiles, and 125 million freshwater and marine fish. Many of these species are regulated or protected by international agreements.

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The new rules contain general provisions for humane and healthful transport, and specific sections covering primates, marine mammals, elephants, bats, other mammals, and birds. Special requirements for birds include perches for perching birds, a limit of 25 or 50 birds per crate (depending on the size of the birds), sufficient food and water, and appropriate handling. Also among the new provisions is a prohibition on transporting any sick or injured animal, except for medical treatment.

The rule also addresses technical standards pertaining to all birds and mammals. These include temperature and pressure in cargo holds; length of time animals must be held prior to departure; size of crates or cages; the number of animals per crate; and provisions for observation and care during shipping.

The final rule incorporates the comments of concerned citizens, as well as animal welfare, conservation, veterinary, zoological, and trade organizations. The Service now will begin work to draft regulations for the humane and healthful transport of reptiles, amphibians, and fish imported into the United States.

Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner said, "This agency is committed to ensuring all wild mammals and birds imported into the United States are treated humanely. Armed with these new regulations, we will vigorously enforce the law."